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Employee Incentive Programs

Incentive programs are an excellent way to produce change in an organization, increase enthusiasm, and obtain buy-in concerning green ideas and practices. Rewarding with tangible benefits those who take the time and effort to put forward good ideas not only encourages the continuation of this behavior but also helps motivate others to perform in a similar fashion. The Federal government has a long and successful history of incentive programs aimed to motivate its workforce to save money. More recent versions provide financial incentives for suggestions that could lead to cost savings due to reductions in water, energy, and resource consumption. A sophisticated incentive program can dramatically help reduce the environmental impacts of a facility.

Opportunities

When trying to implement a broad range of environmental actions to “green” facilities and operations, the integrated design team can use incentive programs to motivate and inspire in order to achieve high levels of success in greening efforts. Incentives other than simple monetary rewards (such as using cost savings to further other quality-of-life aspects) should be considered.

Technical Information

The integrated design team members should become aware of existing incentive programs created by utility companies and others. Green building rating programs can be used as incentives by providing recognition for the environmental performance of a facility. These programs can be folded into a site-specific plan created by the design team. Here are several key incentives for the integrated design team to consider:

The Bachelor Enlisted Quarters at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center in Illinois was one of the first LEED-rated building projects. Notable green features include energy-efficient design, recycled-content and indigenous materials, increased glazing for daylight, and commissioning of the facility.

Utility incentive programs include rebates, customized services, bidding programs, and other offerings. In utility incentive bidding programs, tenants, owners, utilities, and energy service companies work together as a team to create energy-efficient systems.

Group incentive programs can be just as important as individual incentive programs. For example, in DOD, groups can use up to 40% of the savings from their energy conservation efforts for quality-of-life improvements at military bases and other facilities.

The Energy Policy Act of 1992 offers Federal agencies the opportunity to participate in any and all electric and gas utility incentive programs that the utilities offer to their non-Federal customers.

Contract incentives: To encourage environmental initiatives in such areas as environmentally preferable purchasing, contract language can be written that provides financial incentives to contractors for improved environmental material selection and product procurement, as the Pentagon parking lot project demonstrates.

Green building rating system incentives: Rating systems such as LEED™ recognize high-performance buildings by awarding points and “levels” (certified, silver, gold, and platinum) for green design initiatives. Used as an incentive program, the rating system assists the design team in setting green priorities in order to receive recognition and added value.

Annual awards programs that recognize outstanding achievements in sustainable design have been established by DOE FEMP, DOD, AIA, and others. These awards can act as incentives to the integrated design team, inspiring and motivating their actions and choices.



Photo: Wight & Company



Photo: Master Sgt. Ken Hammond, U.S. Air Force

At the Pentagon, more convenient parking is designated for carpools—one of many innovative ideas implemented there.

The annual Federal Energy and Water Management Awards are presented by DOE in conjunction with the Federal Interagency Energy Policy Committee (the “656” Committee). The program recognizes outstanding achievements in the efficient use of water and energy, the use of renewable energy sources, and cost-beneficial landscaping practices by the Federal government. Renewable measures include, but are not limited to, photovoltaics, solar thermal systems, passive solar design, biomass energy, wind systems, geothermal heat pumps, and low-head hydro dams. FEMP coordinates this program for the Federal government. The American Institute of Architects recognizes the “Top Ten” sustainable design projects in the United States, annually on Earth Day, while DOD has an Energy and Environment Awards Program for military bases.

Employee suggestions: The standard Federal suggestion program is an excellent vehicle for garnering input from employees regarding the greening of facility operations. This program could be enhanced by linking suggestions or the implementation of suggestions with tangible incentives for employees. To broaden participation, it should be promoted in newsletters, classes,

and training sessions—especially those addressing energy and environmental problems.

References

Paving the Road to Success (EPA 742-R-97-007); *Defending the Environment at the Department of Defense: Using Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Procedures to Maintain the Pentagon and Other DOD Facilities* (EPA742-R-99-002). Copies of these and other EPP case studies and guidance can be ordered from the Pollution Prevention Information Clearing House (PPIC); (202) 260-1023; www.epa.gov/opptintr/epp/.

Contacts

For information on the FEMP Awards Program, call the FEMP Help Desk at (800) DOE-EREC (363-3732).

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